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A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY, APRIL 16, 1865,

IN THE

Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Neapack, New Jersey.

By REV. HENRY P. THOMPSON.

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SCHERMERHORN, BANCROFT & CO., Publishers,
130 Grand Street, New York.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

PEAPACK, *April 17, 1865.*

Rev. H. P. THOMPSON :

DEAR SIR : Having listened with great pleasure to the words of cheer contained in your sermon of yesterday, commingled as they were with the sad notes of mourning of a great nation over her chosen chief, and believing that the dissemination of such sentiments may be productive of good, we respectfully request a copy of the same for publication.

ANDREW RARICK,
WILLIAM HILLARD,
PETER T. SUTPHEN,
B. V. VAN ARSDALE,
J. HARRISON LINABURY,
JOHN W. DEMUN,
DAVID APGAR,
PETER DE MOTT.

PEAPACK, *April 18, 1865.*

GENTLEMEN : Your note requesting the manuscript of my sermon on Sunday last, is at hand.

The sermon was first prepared with reference to the recent victories of our armies, and the duties and privileges of Christians in connection therewith ; and then, on Saturday night, hurriedly adapted to the circumstances of mourning and sorrow which came so suddenly upon us. It was prepared simply for the benefit of my own congregation ; but, relying on your judgment as to its further usefulness, I cheerfully place it at your disposal.

Very truly yours,

HENRY P. THOMPSON.

To Messrs. A. RARICK, WILLIAM HILLARD, P. T. SUTPHEN, and others.

In Memoriam.

Isaiah xxi. 11, 12.—“Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.”

THIS brief prophecy concerning Dumah, or Idumea, consists of few, but bold and highly figurative, expressions, and represents the prophet, though at present enduring affliction with his people, yet as confident and hopeful in reference to the future.

A few words of explanation concerning the time and circumstances and the original application of the prophecy; and then, for the main body of the discourse, we shall, taking the prophet's stand-point, and considering the question of the text as addressed to us, endeavor to answer it in its application to ourselves.

I. Let it be observed that the whole is dramatic—the prophet himself speaking for all concerned. The prophecy itself was probably spoken during the time of the Babylonish captivity. *It is night* with the people; the night of a dark and dreary, and terrible captivity. It is a time of calamity, darkness, and distress. But a little time ago they were prosperous and happy in their own land. *Now*, in a strange land,

they mourned in what seemed a hopeless captivity. Under these circumstances the prophet is represented as placed on a watch-tower, looking anxiously for the issue—watching closely every turn in affairs, whether anything betokens the release of his people. Standing thus upon his tower, as the watchful guardian of his people, noting every turn in the political affairs of the nation, and also of their enemies, and drawing his conclusions from such careful observations, he is addressed by one from Idumea. This was the land bordering on the south of that of the Jews, and its inhabitants, if they did not take part with the Babylonians in destroying Jerusalem, at any rate exulted over its destruction, saying, “Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation.” (Ps. 137). This Idumean is represented as calling out to the prophet and tauntingly inquiring, “What of the night?” Is there prospect of deliverance? Will Israel’s God come to the rescue? Are the signs of the times such as to give hope of speedy release? Or, is there no such hope, and merely a prospect that these calamities are to continue? “Watchman, what of the night?”

To this the prophet returns a prompt reply, carrying with it both instruction and warning to the enemies of his people. “The watchman said, The morning cometh, *and also the night.*” In place of the night of darkness and calamity, and mourning and distress, which now hangs over the people of God, light and joy shall arise. “The morning cometh—and also the night.” The morning cometh to us; and when it is come, mark it, the night cometh also, but not to us. When the *morning* dawns upon us radiant with light and joy, *night*, with its pall of darkness, shall fall upon our enemies. You ask, “What of the night?” I tell you plainly; “the morning cometh” to us, but the night also—a night of calamity, of darkness, of overwhelming defeat and dismay to our enemies. Having given the inquirer this answer, the prophet in-

timates that if he was disposed to ask further concerning the matter, he should not hesitate to do it. "If ye will inquire, inquire ye." The matter was now clear to the watchman's eye, and he was disposed to give the information. And yet, even in this warning, behold the heart of the man of God going out in tenderness, even toward his enemies—toward the enemies of his nation, the enemies of righteousness and truth. I have answered your question—but now, if you seriously wish to learn further concerning the matter, ask with earnestness and with proper regard to the prophetic character and for God, and it shall be told thee. And then he adds, "Return, come." Turn from your evil ways; repent of this your great sin and folly in opposing God, and the ways of truth and righteousness, and then "come," and you may be accepted of Him, and the night which is now threatened may yet be dispelled, and the morning, bright with joy, yet dawn upon you. Thus far in explication of the text. The prophecy is brief, but beautiful—beautiful in the promptness and confidence of its utterance—beautiful in the fulness and importance of the truth it contains, "alike for the afflicted and persecuted friends, and the persecuting and taunting foes of God." Such were the original circumstances under which these words were uttered, and such the application of them in reference to the friends and enemies of God and of righteousness.

But it was not merely for those times and circumstances that these words were spoken. We are taught that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." They were written then for *our* instruction, for *our* warning, for *our* comfort. Let us then

II. Faithfully consider and apply them, remembering that they are God's words, not man's, and that they were written

by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, for our consideration and profit,

1. Specifically to individuals. There are times and circumstances in the history of every one which form a parallel with those we have just reviewed; times when sorrow and darkness gather round, and the soul for the time is bereft of peace and joy and hope. The affliction may be in mind, body or estate; and the cloud may remain for a longer or a shorter period, as God deems best for his own glory or the good of the afflicted. In a thousand forms man is subject to trial, and needs the cheering rays of God's word of promise to support him therein. And it is when man is enabled to take hold, by faith, of those promises; when he can clearly see and fully realize that God doeth all things well, and that He is, by affliction or trial sent, but accomplishing, in the best way, His own infinitely wise and holy purposes—it is when man fully realizes this, that he rises above his sorrows, and looks forward with hope and confidence to the brighter morn which shall ere long appear.

It is this assured confidence that God lives and rules in heaven and in earth; that He takes cognizance of *all* that transpires, and that he is directing all things for the furtherance of his own glory and his people's good; 'tis this that forms the "silvery lining" to any cloud, no matter how heavy or how long soever it may have hung, and gives the promise of the coming morn. To one thus sustained and comforted and cheered, "the morning cometh." Night, with its dark clouds, may have hovered long, but when thus he takes hold on God, the morning is at hand.

2. What may thus be said of individuals is likewise applicable to communities and nations, for they also are subject to sorrow, trial, and grief.

And surely words of divine promise, of comfort, and joy,

and hope, were never more applicable than those of my text to *our own nation* now!

A long, dark, dreary night has rested on the nation. As the clouds increased and grew heavier and blacker, till at length they burst in all the wild fury of rebellious war over the land, and as the demoniac energy of those in rebellion seemed, for a time, successfully to threaten *the very life* of the Government, men stood appalled and dismayed. When they saw the Government of their fathers, which had proved so great a blessing; which had been built up *by* the people, and *for* the people; which had been cemented by so many tears and prayers, and trials and sufferings; and which had already become a beacon-light for the down-trodden and oppressed of all nations—when they saw that Government ruthlessly assailed and its very existence jeopardized, men's hearts, for a time, sank within them. And even when we had strong confidence in God, that He would not allow such gross wickedness eventually to triumph, yet the trial was accompanied by so much at which the heart sickens; by so great sacrifice of blood and treasure and life; so many homes were made desolate and so many hearts made to bleed, that, ever and anon, we were ready, as we looked over the dark scene, to exclaim, in the words of the text, "Watchman, what of the night? *WHAT of the night?*"

But now, God be praised, the night seems almost past. To the question of the text, as thus applied, we answer, with grateful hearts, "The morning cometh!" With what beaming countenances, with what cheerful expressions, with what bounding hearts of joy have the people of this land congratulated each other over the events of the past two weeks! The night of rebellion—of that which has caused untold suffering and trial and sorrow—is well-nigh spent. And now the "morning" breaks! This tremendous conflict, this gigantic

strife, which through four long years has been waged with unabated fury, which has clothed in mourning almost every family in the land, and which counts its victims not only by tens but hundreds of thousands, is at length about to close.

The Government has been maintained, righteousness has been vindicated, and high-handed and organized wickedness been well-nigh crushed. "The Republic has been saved, and not only saved, but exalted as a witness for the rights of man and the truth of God before all nations. Its cause, from the first hour of the war, was justified by faith; through its continuance it has been sanctified by loyal blood; and now this cause is glorified by the solemn approval of the God of the whole earth."

It is right that we should rejoice and be glad, that now, at length, "the morning cometh." *It is right* that we should, with grateful hearts, give thanks to God—the God of battles—that he has given us the victory. And as, with glad hearts, we emerge from the trial which has so long pressed upon us, let us pray God, let us humbly and earnestly beseech Him, to direct us henceforth to live to His glory. Sin must be punished; such is the immutable law of God's government; and as nations have no existence hereafter, their sins must meet their punishment in this world. May we not hope that ours have now been expiated?

But now as to the future. Do you believe that God can turn the hearts of the children of men to the ways of righteousness and truth? That He can give wisdom and discretion, and honesty of purpose and all needful qualifications to our rulers? And do you believe that He hears and answers prayer? See to it, then, that you be not chargeable with utter neglect of duty in this matter, in that you never prayed for God's blessing on your country; that you never asked Him to give our rulers wisdom and to turn our people to

the practice of righteousness and truth ; that you never asked even that *you yourselves* might be led by God's Spirit to know AND TO DO, *what is right in your relations as citizens.*

God is the Sovereign Ruler, and righteousness and truth shall prevail, let who will cavil or resist. In this assurance we rejoice, and our faith is confirmed therein as we see it exemplified in the promise of the bright, approaching morn for our land. But as we rejoice, *and as we firmly stand for the right and resist the wrong*, let us, in word and deed, say to those who have done evil, "Return," "Come." The prophet declared that "the morning" was at hand for those that feared the Lord and walked in His ways, but that "the night" was also coming for those who resisted the ways of righteousness. And while he boldly and fearlessly uttered the warning against evil and the evil-doers, he cordially and tenderly entreated them to turn from the evil unto righteousness. Even so, while *we stand, firm for the right*, let us also show that we are ever ready to welcome repentant returning ones to the true brotherhood of righteousness and peace.

But lo ! in the midst of all our rejoicings and the bright hopes which have so lately cheered and animated us, the nation is suddenly—Oh, how suddenly !—plunged into profoundest sorrow by the untimely death of its Executive and head. But *forty-eight hours* ago the nation was at the height of joyful exultation over the decisive victories which gave promise of a speedy peace and a restored Union to a long-suffering people. To-day every loyal heart must suffer the terrible shock, and swell with overburdening grief at the calamity which has been permitted to befall us in the assassination of our Chief Magistrate. The flags that were so lately flung to

the breeze in token of a nation's joy that peace and an established Government and Union and brotherhood were so near at hand, to-day, draped in the emblems of mourning, must hang at half-mast, for its chosen chief is dead. The nation mourns; for her honest, her brave, and fearless, and yet tender and sympathizing ruler and head lies low in death. She mourns; for it is the commander-in-chief of her army and navy who has fallen—who has fallen, too, not by disease, nor in the accepted peril of war—but by the foul stroke of a cowardly assassin. The nation mourns, because just now, on the eve of reunion and reconstruction, she looked with high hopes and with confidence to the unswerving integrity, the manly independence, and the unfaltering firmness of her Chief Magistrate to guide her safely through the dangers which yet beset her.

"The plot included the murder of Secretary Seward also, and all the circumstances show that the same political fury and hate which lit the flames of the great rebellion, inspired these hellish deeds; and by so much as these detract from the splendor of our triumph in its utter subjugation, by so much do they brand with a deeper and more damning infamy its plotters, its leaders, its abettors, its sympathizers, its character in impartial history."

Abraham Lincoln is dead! His work is done, and its record is on high. Never man had greater responsibilities laid upon him; never man was called to a more difficult and trying position, and never did man receive more overwhelming testimony of the gratitude and trust of a confiding people. But he is no more. His memory will be embalmed in a grateful nation's heart for untold generations yet to come.

Turn we once again to the question of the text, and ask, "Watchman, what of the night?" *Under this new darkness—this seemingly enigmatical dispensation,* "What of the night?" I answer, be firm and undismayed, for "THE MORNING

COMETH." You and I may fall by the way ere we behold the full glory of its ushering in; but, "with a glory beaming far," it surely comes. The glory of a peace and prosperity and brotherhood which the past has not known. The signs of the times portend this.

God is teaching us, by this sad event, "Not to put our trust in man;" "not to put our trust in *princes*." He is teaching us that the preservation of the Government, the safety of the Republic, does not depend upon any one man, or set of men; only let the people learn righteousness, let them fear the Lord and, putting their trust in Him, walk worthy of their high privileges, and all will be well. The republic has been saved through Divine mercy nerving the hearts and strengthening the arms of the loyal millions as they passed through fire and blood to attain this purpose. Saved, "so as by fire;" yet saved, honored, and exalted in the eyes of all nations! And though, one by one, the *men* of Israel die, the *God* of Israel lives; and if the people will but trust in Him, working righteousness and eschewing evil, the morning, radiant with light and blessing, shall soon again dawn upon us.

3. Thus, too, not only for ourselves and for the nation, but in a wider application, for the world, shall righteousness and truth prevail over wickedness and error.

When Christ came, the whole world had become corrupt, and save only the few thousands of Israel, had lost even the true knowledge of God. Satan's kingdom had taken deep root; its branches towered toward heaven and filled all the earth: and as a consequence men lived in wretchedness and woe, and died in hopelessness and despair.

Now from all this Christ came to deliver us. He came to call men back to happiness and God. But that this might be accomplished Satan's power must be overthrown. *Knowledge* must take the place of *ignorance*; a *true worship* that of *super-*

stition ; holiness of vileness ; justice of oppression, and love to God and man become the ruling motive in the hearts and lives of men. The standard of righteousness and truth was then set up against *every form of iniquity*. Henceforth a continued, vigorous, determined warfare was to be waged against the powers of hell which had so long ruled the world ; and wherever and in whatever form evil manifested itself, it was to be met and resisted and overcome by the power which had been inaugurated and put in operation for that purpose. He who came to destroy the works of the devil and to restore man to his God, established the means adapted to that end. The spiritual religion which Christ gave to man, bearing with it the energizing power of Divinity, is accomplishing that work ; and though it seem long delayed, it shall, in His own good time, be made complete. That system of religion is “ the mighty power of God to the pulling down of the strongholds of Satan ” in every form. It is one which encircled in its design and was to bless by its influence the whole family of man. As such this system of Divine truth has gone forth in the ages that are past, not as a feeble instrumentality, but as mighty to the overthrowing of Satan’s kingdom. Millions in the past have been enlightened thereby and brought under its saving power. Mighty forms of organized wickedness and oppression have been overcome ; and what it has done in the past it is still accomplishing, with continually increasing power, throughout the nations of the earth.

In its beginnings, indeed, it seemed but a little cloud—the size of a man’s hand—shedding its drops of influence in the land of Palestine. But as we stand and look upon the moral world to-day, we can but exclaim, with confidence and hope and triumph, “ The morning cometh ! ” No longer in the land of Palestine alone, amid a few thousands only, with here and there a little company to disseminate the truth, but in all

quarters of the earth, in Europe, Asia, America; yes, and in Africa, too, and in the islands of the sea, millions have felt its power and turned to God. The "stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands" is fast becoming "the mountain which shall fill the whole earth." Righteousness and truth and holiness shall eventually triumph.

And amid all the noise and din of war; amid the battle cloud and smoke which have so long hung over our own beloved land, we discern the onward march, the steady advance of truth and righteousness over error and iniquity. A long, dark, dreary scene of evil has prevailed, but lo, the morning breaks!

And so throughout the moral wastes of earth—the world thrown open to the Gospel, the increased and increasing spirit of liberality among God's people; the rapid multiplication of copies of the Word of God, every church built, every herald of the cross sent forth, every sermon and tract and word printed or spoken for truth, hastens and adds new promise of the coming millennial morn. "The morning cometh" for truth, and righteousness, and holiness, and God: "And also the night" for unrighteousness, injustice, oppression, and iniquity of every form. These may yet linger long before they are finally and fully overcome. Satan, working through the evil hearts and inclinations of men, will not readily yield the prize of a world of human souls. But as surely as the morning breaks for truth and holiness, so surely comes the night to Satan and all his emissaries and works. The word of the Lord hath spoken it, and in His own time He will bring it to pass. His truth is marching on to the destruction of every opposing force, and all the past gives promise of assured success.

If the workers of iniquity, if those who despise or condemn God's righteous ways will inquire farther about this

matter, "inquire ye." The vision is clear; the revelation complete; the promise sure. Satan and his works and followers shall be overthrown. God's truth, and power, and justice, and indignation, too, shall be known against His enemies as well as His love and mercy toward them that fear and love His name.

In view of all this, know assuredly that all opposition to God shall be overcome. He *will* be exalted God over all; and all who continue in rebellion against Him, who turn aside from His ways, who *will not* be governed by His truth, lose not only the richest enjoyments and blessings here and hereafter, but ensure to themselves everlasting punishment and woe. Now He calls you by His grace. Now He pleads with you, saying, "Return," "Come," and offers you pardon and blessing, such as only God can give.

Again, to those who profess to love and serve God: Are you rendering a real and hearty service, or is it only partial? Is it your great aim to be entirely conformed to the will of God, or are you keeping back, as Ananias did, a part of the price, reserving the privilege of exhibiting an unholy, unbrotherly, and unchristian temper whenever *your* ideas of propriety, or *your* prejudiced views may be crossed or thwarted by the truth of God, as exhibited in His Word or in the life and conduct of others? Examine and see; try yourself by the rule of God's Word, and remember that "not every one that *saieth* unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven." We are living in times and circumstances in which we cannot, without great guilt, shut our eyes or ears or steel our hearts against the reception of God's truth, as shown in His providential dealings with us. See to it that ye quit yourselves like men in the discharge of the grave responsibilities laid upon you.

God's wonder-working hand has been as plainly manifest in our recent history, as a nation, as ever before. The dark night of rebellion and war, in which our giant wrong and shame have perished, will be succeeded by the brightest day which ever dawned upon a regenerated people. But you have duties as well as privileges in the future. Hundreds of thousands of lives have been sacrificed, but it will not have been in vain if now each one, standing in his place, will, in the fear of God and with direct reference to his glory, discharge individual responsibility.

Our great and good leader, our noble President, has fallen, just as his eyes beheld the gilding of the coming morn. Thus, by his blood, he sealed the testimony which in life he gave for the cause of human liberty—for the cause of righteousness and truth. But when the enemies of liberty and truth slew him, they all unwittingly placed upon his brow the martyr's wreath. If there was one thing yet wanting to complete the circlet of his glory here, they gave it him when they caused it to be said, that for the principles for which Abraham Lincoln so faithfully labored, so patiently endured, he laid down his life also. And now he wears the victor's crown in glory. "He rests from his labors and his works do follow him."


Finally, be of good cheer in reference to the future of our land. We have passed through fire, but it was to purify, not to destroy. We have passed through the storm, but it was to strengthen, not to overcome. We have passed through the flood, but it was to cleanse and not to overwhelm. We are passing—we have, as a nation, already passed—to a higher stand-point in morals and religion, the principles which shall yet rule the world. "The watchman saith, the morning cometh!" Yes, the morning breaks radiant with liberty and Union, with peace and brotherhood and prosperity, such as our eyes have not yet beheld. Take home to your hearts the

Word of God. Be cheered by its promise, be guided by its instructions, be moved by its warnings.

The watchman saith, the morning cometh; and also the night. If ye will inquire, inquire ye. Return, come.

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